

Kinship Care
DSL network meeting 14.03.2025
Carmel Treanor Advanced Practitioner Kinship Team



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Objective:

- To help build working relationships with schools.
- To support with queries in relation to Kinship carers.
- To provide overview of role and remit of Kinship team.



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Kinship team structure

- **Assessment Family and Friends as alternative carers**
- **Kinship Support.**



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What is Kinship care



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Kinship Care

- Kinship care refers to the care of children by relatives or close family friends who step in to care for a child when a parent is unable to do so.
- Refers to different types of legal arrangements including Kinship foster care and Special Guardianship orders as well as informal kinship care arrangements where friends or family members care for a child without a legal order.



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Types of Kinship care.

- **Kinship foster carer** (known as a connected FC) is assessed by the Kinship team -once approved transfers to the fostering service and they do not have PR for the child. LA has PR for the child.
- **Private fostering** informal kinship care arrangements where friends or family members care for a child without a legal order.
- **Child Arrangements order** outlines the living arrangements for a child, and who they will have contact with. Shared PR equally (birth parents)-Less intrusive assessment/ no parental conflict.
- **Special Guardianship order** SG has enhanced PR allows them make decisions to the exclusion of others except another SG carer. **Note:** LA has no statutory role.



Who makes up the group known as Kinship carers.

- Typically, Kinship carers used to be predominantly grandparents but nowadays this cohort of carers take all forms:
- Older siblings looking after younger siblings
- Uncles, neighbours' friends.



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Differences between Kinship and Foster care



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Foster care (mainstream)

- A foster carer is someone approved by children's services to care for a child who is in care of the Local Authority.
- Foster care is typically provided by individuals who are not related to the child.
- Foster care carers do not have any legal rights over a child.
- **Legal responsibility** Parental Responsibility for the child remains with LA. Foster carers provide day to day care but do not have PR.



Kinship Carer

- Special Guardianship carers have a more permanent and legally secure role.
- Obtaining PR for the child until they are 18
- Making almost all the decisions about the child's care without needing the parents' consent.
- Provide a permanent home for the child.
- SG's can make almost all decisions independently but need permission from birth parents or the court for certain major decisions such as changing the child's surname or taking them abroad for more than 3 months



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Case study for schools dealing with PR issues and SGO's

A mother arrives at the school to pick up her child claiming she has PR for the child. The school is aware that the child's grandmother has an SGO. The mother has PR but has not been involved in school pick ups before.

What should the teacher do?



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- **Prioritise the child's safety.** Teacher should not release child to mother without verifying the situation.

Consult school records. Check child's file to confirm the details of the SGO and any specific instructions regarding pick up arrangements.

- **Inform senior staff.** Notify headteacher or DSL
- Engage with the mother. Politely explain that due to the SGO school needs to verify right to collect child before releasing.
- **Contact the Special Guardian.** Confirm if they have given permission for mother to collect child.
- **Explain the SGO limitations.** If necessary, inform mother that the SGO gives SG carer overriding responsibility.
- **Document the incident** and decisions made for future reference.



Key considerations

- Special Guardians have a higher level of PR than birth parents under SGO.
- Schools play a crucial role in safeguarding children and must adhere to legal orders like SGO's
- Clear communication is essential to avoid potential conflicts.

Case study highlights the importance of schools being fully informed about legal orders for children and having clear protocols in place for handling complex family dynamics.



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Profile of a Kinship Carer

- Often older
- Disadvantaged groups
- Mistrust for authority.
- Don't have great relationships with statutory services as their children are known to children's services.
- Often have had difficult childhoods themselves
- Limited support networks



- What are the challenges for Kinship carers.



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Challenges.

- Not prepared for their role usually take the child in an emergency. Not in retirement plan.
- Managing trauma and complex needs.
- Managing ongoing family relationships (parents blaming of SG carer stealing their child angry after court and seeking to disrupt arrangements.
- Split loyalties.
- Managing impact on child of inconsistent family time.
- Managing their own vulnerabilities eg health and age:

Limited support and family time issues are the biggest factors for breakdowns.



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What are the challenges for children in Kinship care.



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- Distress at prospect of seeing their parents can be very triggering. Placing huge emotional burdens on children, often too high frequency.
- Worry parents won't turn up
- Made to feel different not in care of parent.
- Suffered adverse childhood experiences, domestic abuse, drug and alcohol experience of multiple / transient carers.
- Mixed feelings around family time afraid to show care to parent in fear of upsetting SG carer

We all need to be more trauma informed.

(mandatory trauma informed training for Social Care Practitioners)



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What do you know about your Kinship carers

Who has informed schools about SGO? LA or the SG carers themselves or both

Need Consent from the SG carer so we can inform about support services.



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- Support Kinship team offers.



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- **ASSGF** funded by DFE only for previously looked After children range of therapy each child has a fund limit up until 18. SG's can contact Kinship. Kinship team webinar on 24.04 about ASSGF
- MAPS trainings and groups. Emotions and communications,9 child and carer) Trauma and Attachment groups. (Carer)
- Support groups and Kinship fun days (can email these events to schools)
- HAF codes for free holiday clubs (summer Christmas and Easter only)
- Targeted programmes (available to all) run by Adolescent Development Service throughout the year aged 8 upwards. 1:1 mentoring confidence boosting groups, Art therapy groups, transition to High school programmes cooking craft sport.
- Skills to Care TSG carers have access to foster carer trainings (2025 2026 Training brochure
- Training run by Kinship PACE training to carers.
- SGO allowance if eligible until child is 18 if remain living with them subject to annual means test.



3 Government Initiatives

- **National Kinship care strategy Championing Kinship care.**
- **Kinship care Practice Guide Oct 2024**
- **Keeping children safe Helping Families Thrive November 2024**

Initiatives came about from campaigns by kinship carers for better support and recognition for kinship families. They want the same support as foster carers and adoptive parents.

Kinships Breaking point report highlighted the challenges faced by Kinship carers .

Aim to keep more children with people who are known to them who love them when they cannot live with their parents.

Social care reform.



National Kinship care strategy Championing Kinship care.

- 20 million investment to support Kinship care
- 3 million investment national training information and support.
- Peer support groups delivered through Kinship charity
- Extending legal aid entitlements for SGO in private proceedings.
- Making children in kinship care eligible for fairer access protocols for school admissions.



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Kinship care Practice Guide Oct 2024

- Aimed at supporting senior leaders in local areas to develop effective services for Kinship families.
- Children to be supported to remain within their family network.
- Recommendations
- Offer Kinship carers specialist support to improve **placement stability**.
- Provide kinship carers with parenting support to improve children's behaviour
- Facilitate peer support groups to improve kinship carers wellbeing.
- Financial allowances to be increased.



- Equalise financial allowance,
- Equalise training and support
- Equalise leave between adoptive and kinship families
- Equalise support between children in foster care and kinship
- Extended educational support for kinship children. 3.8 million invested to expand the role of virtual school heads. **Have schools seen better liaisons with virtual schools.?**



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Keeping children safe Helping Families Thrive November 2024

- Broader Govt policy statement outlining a strategic vision for overhauling children social care.
- Strengthening multi agency Child Protection
- Increased regulation of profit driven providers.
- Enhanced cooperation between schools, families and safeguarding agencies.
- Introduction of Family group decision making
- Dedicated support for care leavers 18 to 25
- Expanded responsibilities for Virtual School Heads.



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All 3 initiatives aim to improve outcomes for children

- **Kinship care Practice Guide** focuses on local implementation
- **Keeping children safe strategy** focuses on broader reforms
- **National Kinship care strategy** provides targeted support and policy changes specifically for Kinship care arrangements.



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Useful Links

Contact us kinship@hillingdon.gov.uk

If you are **worried** about a child: StrongerFamiliesHub@hillingdon.gov.uk

Support for Kinship carers. Kinship.org.uk Free training and advice for Kinship carers managing family time, trauma and attachment and kinship children at school.

Virtualschooladmin@hillingdon.gov.uk

Schools to identify SG carers and let them know about our support and give them our contact details. Get their consent for us to email them our support offers.



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